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Bonnie and Clyde For the First Time in the 2020s Era

Bonnie and Clyde (Penn, 1967), as Dave Kaufman wrote, uses “killings and the backdrop of the Depression [as] scarcely material for a bundle of laughs.” This was the thought over 50 years ago. Now? Yes, the film absolutely does this—what heartless filmmakers! So, what was it like for a first-time viewer in the 2025 period of cinema? Quite enjoyable. While controversial at the time, looking at the film’s tone and use of violence now, it appears effective and engaging in a world of *Jokers* and *Harley Quinns*.

While Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty give memorable performances as Bonnie and Clyde, the film's inconsistent tone makes it difficult to fully invest into their characters. Their portrayals are stylish and outstanding, and their chemistry on screen is fun to watch. However, there is little to attach to. The two of them, along with the rest of the cast, are bold and flamboyant, which makes for great entertainment. The unfortunate result: the excessively animated performances become the only thing about them that sticks. This comes from a lot of serious moments being lightened by the “politeness” of our protagonists. “Good Afternoon, this is the Barrow Gang!” Nothing better than a formal greeting from the people who are about to rob you. In that same scene, Clyde lets a farmer keep his money, but also shoots at a cop (a lot of cops get shot at in this film). This sequence, like many others in the film, is built for entertainment. It serves as an example of these little nuances that add some humanity to our characters, showing us that they are not truly evil. While they offer the audience insight into a soft spot that these criminals have, using comedy in this sense can take away from the effect of empathizing with them, as the tone leans more into something less serious. These characters become real to the audience, at the cost of undermining their actions. This is just one of many

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moments sprinkled in the film that struggle with tone. There is an overall imbalance of comedy and moral reflection. In the end, the fluctuation of tone here reduces the film's ability to portray their characters as complex as it seems they were meant to be.

With that, there are some aspects here that follow the conventions of the Gangster, those being the distinctive language, sound, and the rise and fall narrative, featuring a necessary comeuppance for our protagonists. However, even with its loud gunshots, tire squeals, and broken glass, the film breaks away from the Gangster genre through its numerous laugh-out-loud moments and immersive Western-like score.

If the goal with *Bonnie and Clyde* was to take the audience along a Gangster film without the broodiness, it is a sure success. It effectively blends violence and the Depression as material for humor, and it's effective. What's missing is the heart; with the humane actions presented to us, we are given reason to like our characters, but no reason to care, and at some points, I started to miss the seriousness.

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Works Cited

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